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BuShips Streamlines Records

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Reciting Advantages

OF

TRACT-A-FILE

A PRODUCT OF Ramsey COMPANY . 116 SOUTH SEVENTH STREET . PHILA. 6, PA.
MARKET 7-0879

BUSHIPS STREAMLINES RECORDS

No one factor is more important to an organization's progress than a compact, efficient records operation. If the Bureau of Ships is to keep pace with today's rapidly changing technology, its records service must consistently satisfy present needs while standing ready to meet the future.

Until early this year the Bureau's records facilities were far from adequate for even present needs. With space in the Main Navy Building at premium, records were widely scattered. General information records were housed at the rear of the fourth wing on the third floor. Secret records were on the first floor in a small building at the front of the third wing. Contract records were across town at 131 Indiana Avenue. Small wonder researches and deliveries were difficult and costly time-wise.

In addition to storage equipment, each records group had its own supervisory, research, and file personnel. The general records section, including the specifications and standards distribution unit, occupied some 6,550 square feet of floor space; the secret records section utilized approximately 3,000 square feet; and the contract records section, about 4,000 square feet—more than 13,500 square feet all told.

Even with all this space, conditions were crowded to overflowing—with file cabinets lining hallways and cartons of stock items cluttering aisles and space under sorting tables. With present requirements of the Bureau calling for the filing of more than 150,000 documents a month, demand was fast exceeding capacity.

This was the situation early in 1957 when the Office Services Branch—under whose cognizance the three records sections functioned—took steps toward remedial action. The problem was two-fold: centralization of record areas and greater housing capacity.

The immediate need being for additional storage capacity, a study was undertaken to find the most suitable of the various types of filing equipment available commercially. The equipment study was hardly under way when orders came through for cutbacks in space and personnel ceilings. This action compounded the problem, for space arrangements are also a function of the Office Services Branch.

The urgency for reducing and consolidating records space added impetus to the search for a unique type of equipment that not only would accommodate the expanding volume of material, but also meet the new space limitations.

Aware that open-shelf filing was the simplest and best known methods of storing and retrieving active records, branch analysts evaluated the several types of open-shelf equipment on the market. Vertical tub files, motorized banks of shelving mounted on floor tracks, and suspended sliding shelves, among other types, were subjected to careful scrutiny.

The type finally selected as offering the most in capacity for the space required was the Tract-A-File equipment—steel units of open shelving so constructed as to enable the suspension of movable shelves from free-standing floor units. The hanging units slide from side to side on overhead rails to give access to the fixed floor units behind. Five of these floor units will support two rows of four individual sliding units, each of which can be moved easily to the left or right for access to the row immediately behind it or to the basic floor units in the rear. The need for aisle space between the rows is thus eliminated.

Furthermore, open-shelf filing equipment requires only 30 inches of aisle space between facing banks as against 36 inches for conventional file cabinets with drawers. To illustrate the savings possible in floor space alone—Tract-A-Files require only 143.34 square feet to house the same material stored in 5-drawer cabinets occupying 255.3

Filing equipment formerly used in specifications distribution unit was inadequate for volume records handling; dividers and labels were difficult to change.

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square feet. The 5-drawer cabinets take up 79.3 percent more floor space.

Additional space saving can be achieved through the Tract-A-Files greater capacity. A single, free-standing unit of letter-size shelving--3 feet wide and 7 feet high--has a filing capacity equal to two and one-quarter 4-drawer file cabinets. For instance, material in the general records section that ties up 354 5-drawer file cabinets occupying 1800 square feet has now been transferred to 110 Tract-A-File units requiring only 600 square feet.

Tract-A-File equipment, in addition to its space-saving advantages, is adaptable to most needs of records operation. For filing and research purposes, units are available with shelving to accommodate letter-size or legal-size folders. Bottom-resting folders, supported by lined sliding dividers, are labeled at the exposed end. A pull-out shelf st convenient height aids work in progress. With the good visibility provided by the open shelving, material on top and bottom levels is readily accessible. The lined dividers help preserve the finish on shelves and assure quiet, easy operation.

It is when used at a distribution point to house regularly issued items--such as Military and Federal specifications or Navy directives--that the Tract-A-File has the most to offer in speed and efficiency.

The construction of the shelving is unique in that it enables the suspension of folders in a semi-fixed state. Hooks at the top of the folder are fastened into the curved front and back edges of the shelf so that the folder hangs free and is easily movable from side to side. These hanging folders, when labeled, become the permanent home of the material being filed whether in its own removable folder or separately. Home folders are easily installed or removed when transfer is required, although they cannot be removed or mispalaced accidentally.

It was this feature of the hanging folder that was so profitably used in the reorganization of the specifications and standards unit for self-service. When the functions of this unit were transferred to the Office Services Branch a year ago, copies of loose material were housed on standard open-shelf filing equipment with fixed metal dividers. Fifty-six 8-tier units requiring 600 square feet of floor space were then in use. All of the material has since been transferred to 40 Tract-A-File units--with shelving for several years' expansion--which now occupy only 250 square feet. The easy accessibility and clear visibility of the contents of the Tract-A-Files enabled conversion of "specs" distribution to self-service.

Tract-A-Files occupy less space, provide greater capacity. Easy accessability of contents made possible self-service for "specs" distribution. Note superstructure which enables suspension of sliding units.

The change-over from conventional file cabinets to Tract-A-Files made the centralization of all records services possible. Records formerly housed in 922 4- and 5-drawer cabinets and 56 9-tier open-shelf units were transferred to 350 Tract-A-File units. The resultant saving of approximately 5,500 square feet enabled:

- The consolidation of contract records with those of the general records in the same area formerly occupied by the general records alone. Legal-size Tract-A-File units were obtained to house the contract records.

- The moving of the secret records section to space close to the general and contract records.

The long-awaited centralization of the Bureau's records services has now been completed. "Records," "Specifications and Standards," and "Communications" are now centrally located in close proximity at the rear of the 3400 wing of the Main Navy Building, with a tie-in to "Mail and Messengers," in the same area of the 3500 wing, by conveyor.

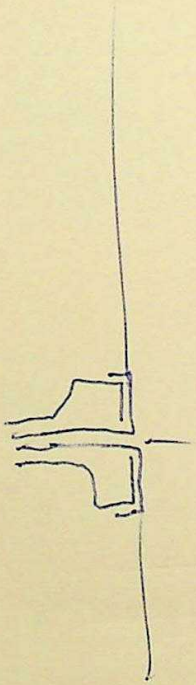
The savings effected by this undertaking were not solely in floor space, although this of itself was substantial. The cost of the new equipment was less by $20,000 than the cost of the required number of conventional cabinets. Installation of the new file equipment made it possible to reduce records services' personnel ceiling by 19. Some of the cutback was atrributable to the speedier, more efficient operation afforded by use of the new equipment; the major part was largely due to the consolidation of two of the sections, each of which had its own office

force. With consolidation it was found that one group could handle the workload.

The immediate results of the change-over in equipment were physical improvements:

- Centralization of records.
- Greater capacity for records with room for expansion.
- Better arrangement of office facilities.
- Larger reception area.
- Quiet, uncongested atmosphere.

With use, other benefits are becoming apparent:

- Improved organization through better control and direction.
- Better utilization of personnel and improved worker efficiency.
- Improved material flow through faster processing.
- Lower operating costs.

Its primary objective, however, the Office Services Branch has already achieved--more efficient, economical support services for the Bureau's military and scientific operations.